

Kennesaw Avenue and Old Highway 41 Analysis & Recommendations



Cobb County...Expect the Best!

December 21, 2011

Cobb Community Development Agency

Planning Division

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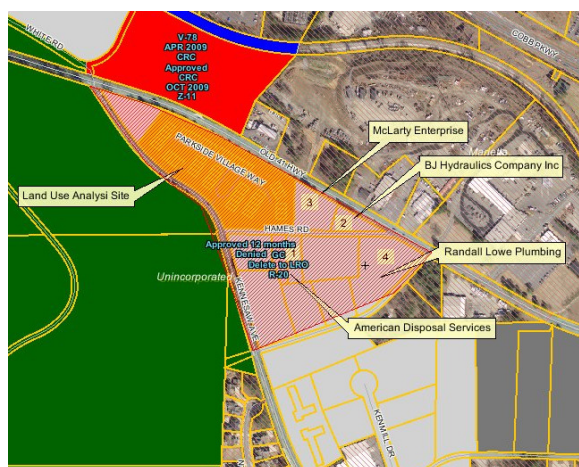
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Introduction:

In September of 2011, the Community Development Agency was asked to analyze land uses in the Kennesaw Avenue and Old 41 Highway area and to recommend solutions including mitigation of future land use impacts and suitable transitions of scale between the area's commercial, industrial, residential and recreation activities.

The study area is located in district 16 land lots 934, 935 and 939. It is the general area north of Kirk Road, south of the CSX railroad tracks, and east of Kennesaw Avenue and consists of approximately 18 acres of residential, commercial and industrial uses. The following is a list of parcel identification numbers within the study boundary.



16093500040 (8.55 acres)
16093900110 (1.05 acres)
16093900100 (0.43 acres)
16093900090 (0.48 acres)
16093900120 (1.95 acres)
16093909010 (2.04 acres)
16093900140 (2.4 acres)
16093500070 (0.9 acres)

Future Land Use Map of study area

Existing and Changing Conditions:

The area is roughly bounded by the City of Marietta to the east, Kirk Road to the south, Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park to the west and the CSX railroad tracks to the north. A restaurant sits in the apex of the intersections of Old Highway 41 and Kennesaw Avenue, known as Louise's Restaurant. In addition, across from Louise's Restaurant is a popular new establishment known as Mountain Biscuits. Residential uses are located just south of the restaurant along Kennesaw Avenue. The area along Kennesaw Avenue abuts the park's multi-use trail. To the south of the residential properties along Hames Road and Kirk Road are industrial and office uses.

The micro-economy in this area of Cobb is primarily industrial in nature. The businesses include a mix of industrial, construction and manufacturing related services. For example, there is a hydraulics company, plumbing, pool equipment, disposal service, restaurants hardware stores, and construction contractors. The study area is also unique in character as it abuts the Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park. The park serves as both a natural and cultural



resource for the area. It preserves the Atlanta Campaign Civil War battle ground site consisting of 2,923 acres. In 1933, the park was transferred from the War department to the Department of the Interior as a unit of the National Park System as an important cultural property due to the significant historical events that occurs during the Civil War. The park consists of 17.3 miles of interpretive walking trails which is also the west boundary of the study area and a multiuse trail of the park.

Many residents and visitors frequent this multiuse trail for mainly recreational purposes. The



site is also a growing international tourist attraction. Regarding residents in the study area, the housing supply is single-family attached residential built within the last ten years. Adjacent to the study area are some single-family detached housing that are in the city limits of Marietta. The housing accounts for approximately 50% of the study area and is located to the north. There is a high percentage of homeownership and few renter occupied units. The current market conditions have negatively impacted home prices and

value. As mentioned above the park is widely used for recreation activity. The area is heavily traversed by pedestrians and bicyclists.

The subject area is comprised of several tracts under the Industrial Compatible, Medium Density Residential, Community Activity Center and Neighborhood Activity Center future land use categories. The northern 8.5 acre parcel across Old Highway 41 and south of the CSX Train lines is categorized as commercial and zoned for a strip commercial development. These types of commercial development may have a negative impact on the surrounding residential and business community due to the increased traffic counts from this type of use, the existing capacity of the roadways, and the blending of multiple modes of traffic, including, heavy pedestrian and bicycle users with vehicular and truck traffic.

Directly across Old Highway 41 is a 0.9 acre site. There is a longstanding restaurant (Louises) that is currently zoned Tourist Service (TS). Tourist Services was established to provide locations for commercial and service uses which are oriented toward automotive businesses and interstate and state highway travelers. The current zoning of the remaining study area reflects industrial, commercial, and residential uses. The goal of this land use analysis is to establish appropriate land use categories that will preserve the established uses, mitigate future land use impacts and provide suitable transitions of scale between the intensity of area activity. There is concern that this site may transition to a more intense automobile oriented



Kennesaw Mountain National Park multiuse trail



use given its location and zoning. Staff believes that given the location of the existing right-of-way and the lack of additional buildable land to make this type of use function, this concern may not be applicable.

Community Visioning:

As a result of growing concerns for this unique industrial, recreational and residential corridor, staff conducted interviews with both the residential and industrial property owners. A public meeting was held in December for additional public input. This process was intended to derive issues and opportunities within the study area to further establish a plan of action. Four main questions were asked to each group to determine areas of concern, strengths and weaknesses of doing business in the area, existing conditions and direction for future development.

1) What are the strength and opportunities of doing business in this area?

Industrial Owners

- Large and loyal customer base
- Longevity of 40,30 and 20 plus years in the area
- The land use and zoning reflect primarily Light Industrial
- Quiet
- Easy access to highway and neighboring communities

Residential Owners

- *Location*
- *National Park*
- *Great for Family*

2) What are the top 1 or 2 aspects of the existing conditions staff should consider during this process?

Industrial Owners

- Consider the time invested by our companies in the area; we have been operating our business for over 20 years and in some cases 30 years.
- We are small commercial business with daily deliveries of materials, which drop off is done in the back, away from the public view
- Staff should consider that prior to the subdivision development there was a scenic view of the National park from our location. This view was taken away once built
- As businesses in this unique area, we have been making a concerted effort to keep the surroundings clean, in addition we have worked with residents to move materials out of the line of sight, remove scrap metals, pressure wash the driveways and approx. every 4-5 years bring a bob-cat to do major cleanup.



- Currently there is silkscreen fence holding up the southern buffered area of the subdivision development which was not removed during construction. This can eventually cause run off in the event of heavy rains unto our property.
- We have supported a neighboring business by signing of petition regarding operations. They are not noisy or disruptive.
- Business to the immediate south do not use Hames Road, the pad lock on the access gate had been there since the 1980's.
- No other concerns

Residential Owners

- *Transition of neighbors*
- *Protect National Park*
- *Limit Pollution*
- *TS Restriction and Category revised*
- *Restrict Industrial traffic on Hames Road, Kirk Road and Kennesaw Avenue to time specific and on CTP (truck size)*
- *Check Accident counts at Kennesaw Avenue*
- *Direct commercial away from park*

3) What options do you see that can help improve the land use concern?

Industrial Owners

- As far as land use is concerned there were no concerns identified by the industrial owners, we like the existing industrial designation.

Residential Owners

- *Revise Comprehensive plan and zoning to the north.*

4) Should Staff set, or modify existing goals/policies for future development in this area related to land use, and if so, what targets and through what mechanisms should they be encouraged or required?

Industrial Owners

- At this time we see no issue with the area.
- Adding additional policies may complicate things and require more work, no change encouraged.

Residential Owners

- *Yes, limit commercial and industrial use close to park to protect residential and park*



Transportation Analysis:



In the study area the road classifications are as follows, Kennesaw Avenue and Old Highway 41 are classified as major collectors, Kirk Road and Hames Road are identified as local streets and White Road is a minor collector. These roadways impact the study area in distinct ways. Pass through truck traffic along Hames Road was noted as a major concern for residents. However, the industrial community disagreed, in that the turning radius and incline onto Kennesaw Avenue makes access difficult for their larger trucks, hence the

preference is to use Kennesaw Avenue or Old Highway 41. The intersection of Kennesaw and Old Highway 41 is bottlenecked throughout peak travel times and the average daily trips as recorded in January of 2008 along Old Highway 41 are 22,300 trips.



Intersection of Old Highway 41 and Kennesaw Avenue



Incline along Kennesaw Avenue at Hames Rd. intersection

A short segment of sidewalk exists on the southwest side of Old Highway 41 between Kirk and Hames Roads. Also, there's a segment of sidewalk on the south side of Kirk Road. Bicycle lanes and trails also exist in the area. The initial segment of the Mountain-to- River Trail runs along the southwest side of Old Highway 41 and continues onto Kennesaw Avenue. This trail segment connects the Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park Visitors Center and the Noonday Creek Trail to Downtown Marietta. Once all segments of the Mountain-to-River Trail are complete, the completed trail will connect to the Chattahoochee National Recreation Area. There is no transit available in this area at present. The study area does have tourist access from Downtown Marietta to Kennesaw Mountain via the Marietta Trolley Company, a private historic tourism company.

Cobb County has a policy to encourage "Complete Streets". A complete street, per the county's policy is one which provides, "...safe access for all users to include motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit users, including individuals with physical disabilities and senior citizens,



in the planning design construction, and operation of streets...”. The transportation dynamics of this area including the truck routes, local traffic, commuter traffic, and recreational users makes it an ideal location to analyze for potential application of the County’s Complete Streets policy and its underlying principles.

Recommendation:

In keeping with the established policies of the Comprehensive Plan, staff has considered the unique case and study area and recommends the following alternatives to encourage suitable transitions of scale between the area’s commercial, industrial, residential and recreation activities and to help mitigate future land use impacts.

- 1) *Consider impacts to adjoining residents when making land use and housing decisions in order to protect residential neighborhoods from negative impacts of non-residential developments*

The large parcel in the northern segment of the study area is currently designated Community Activity Center (CAC). Staff recommends that this area be considered as a less intensive, more appropriate use such as clean industrial, medical offices or medical instrument manufacturing, or storage in the Industrial Compatible (IC) future land use category. This can be an incubator for industrial type employment. There is potential, if current plans are developed as commercial center, for adverse traffic impacts for both the residential and industrial users. Staff will encourage future developers of this site, using the existing commercial zoning, to conduct a traffic study and prepare detailed architectural renderings and landscape plans for staff review. This will ensure that the physical and aesthetic impact of this type of development can be mollified prior to final plan approval. This will provide staff the necessary information to mitigate the potential impact.

Also, the area along Hames Road is designated as IC and Neighborhood Activity Center (NAC). Staff recommends that the Board of Commissioners consider amending the future land use designation for the parcel at the southeastern intersection of Hames Road and Kennesaw Ave from IC to NAC; with comprehensive plan text limiting it to office type use.

- 2) *Provide transitions in scale and/or land use between high and low intensity land uses*

All parcels within the study area abutting the right of way of Kennesaw Avenue shall be considered for Low Rise Office, Office and Institutional or Office/Services zoning districts in order to further minimize the potential





of negative impact of development on adjacent residential areas. In addition, the Board of Commissioners previously approved the same mitigation measures just south of the study area along Kennesaw Avenue where existing industrially zoned property fronts on Kennesaw Avenue. The owners of these properties have placed attractive office buildings that face Kennesaw Avenue and staff recommends that that same text be added to reinforce this practice.

3) *Mitigate possible adverse impacts of new development through the use of screening and buffering*

Residential uses currently buffer the non residential uses from encroaching onto the Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park area. Residential uses also offer a step down to the residential area south and east to the park. This practice is particularly important as it helps to mitigate noise and lighting. It is staff



Buffer along Hames Road

recommendation that the same buffering extend to the non residential areas. Therefore, staff encourages the residential community abutting the industrial and commercial uses to increase their buffering and screening along Hames Road to protect adjacent uses as well as to improve the residential community's viewshed. The photos below show the existing residential buffer along Hames Road.

4) *Encourage a safe and efficient transportation network for all modes of travel*

Due to the various modes of transportation in this area, it is important to have a comprehensive strategy to meeting the safety and mobility needs for all modes of travel. There may be a need to conduct a traffic study and review existing plans to gain a greater understanding of how pedestrians, bicycles, vehicles, and trucks are using the system and how our infrastructure can be improved to maximize safety and access for all users. This would be an ideal location for applying the county's Complete Street policy. Coordination between the Community Development Agency and the Cobb County Department of Transportation has occurred to address these issues.



Public Comments:

A public meeting was held on Thursday, December 15th, 2011 at the Cobb County Administration building Learning Center. Approximately 35 people attended the meeting. Cobb County staff members present were Mr. Dana Johnson, AICP and Ms. Keehren Baah both of the Community Development Planning Division. Also in attendance were District One Commissioner, Ms. Helen Goreham and Planning Commissioner, Mr. Bob Hovey. Commissioner Goreham started the evening by providing an overview of this unique area in Cobb County and gave her expectations for the Kennesaw Avenue Land Use Analysis public process. Her comments included the idea of maintaining this community for both residential and industrial users while working together in partnership with county staff to mitigate future development impacts, and create suitable transitions of scale between the area's various land activities. This was followed by Mr. Johnson providing brief information on the analysis background. Ms. Baah presented details concerning the study process, the staff finding and recommendations.

After the presentation, the audience was provided the opportunity to give feedback to staff on issues in the area, opportunities for growth and comments on the proposed recommendations. This information assisted staff with the final action items as outlined in this document. The following summarizes the participant's opinions on the issues of the study area and opportunities that should be taken into consideration for future development:

Public Feedback

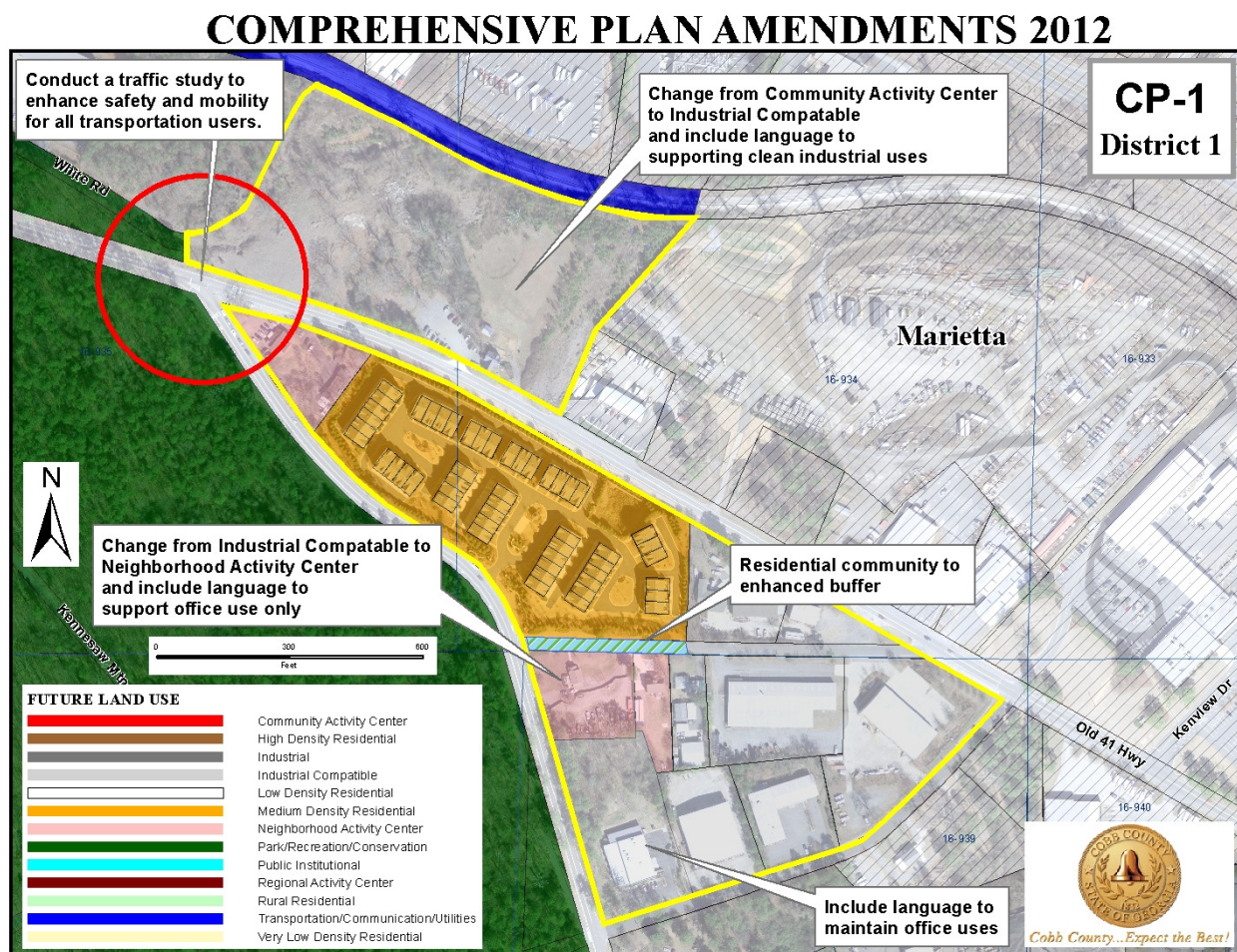
- Cobb County Department of Transportation should conduct a traffic analysis and update the areas traffic counts to reflect current average daily trips as well as providing an indication of the mix of vehicular traffic between local, commuter, and truck traffic.
- Coordinate with Georgia Department of Transportation to explore reducing the area's speed limit for Kennesaw Avenue. The community believes that traffic is moving too fast and needs to be slowed down.
- Consider future land use categories that would promote tourist travel to the Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park.
- Preserve and highlight the history and cultural significance of the park by working with the City of Marietta to improve appearance of Old Highway 41 and Kennesaw Avenue.
- Limit truck traffic on Hames Road or recommend road improvements that will better accommodate existing businesses.
- Review the truck routes for Old Highway 41 and Kennesaw Ave.
- Limit trucks on parcels on the north side of Old Highway 41.
- Lack of adequate and safe pedestrian crossing facilities. This area of the county is a walking community; however, there is concern for the safety of pedestrians. The community mentioned numerous instances of potential vehicular-pedestrian conflict surrounding the Gates at Parkside Village.
- Improve area at Old Highway 41 intersection turning onto Kennesaw Avenue with an inclined angle. Potential and near miss accidents are a major concern



- Office uses are encouraged near and adjacent to residential uses.
- Parcel to the north of Old Highway 41 should encourage recreational facilities.

At the end of the meeting, Ms. Baah described the next steps of the process, which includes edits to the initial draft recommendations based upon the public's input, the Planning Commission meeting on January 5th at 7:00 pm and the Board of Commissioners meeting on January 17th at 9:00 am.

Graphic Representation of Recommendations





Proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendments:

Amendment #1

Parcel:

16093500040

Location:

North side of Old Hwy 41, south of the CSX Railroad tracks, and east of White Rd

Future Land Use amendment:

Change from Community Activity Center (CAC) to Industrial Compatible (IC)

Text Amendment:

In recognition of the industrial, residential and recreational activities that occur near the intersection of Old Highway 41 and Kennesaw Avenue, the Board of Commissioners recommends that the approximate 8.5 acre parcel on the north side of Old Highway 41, east of White Road be amended to the Industrial Compatible (IC) future land use category. In an effort to provide a more compatible use with the neighboring residential community, county staff recommends that the following uses be encouraged: clean industrial, medical offices or medical instrument manufacturing, or storage. These are uses that can be performed internally in a structure and therefore will not have a major visual impact on this tract's transition between the primary industrial uses to the east and the residential and recreational uses to the south and west. Also any new development on this property is recommended to be subject to a traffic study in addition to submitting architectural plans and a landscape plan to assist the decision making process.

Amendment #2

Parcel:

16093900110

Location:

South side of Hames Road east of Kennesaw Ave

Future Land Use amendment:

Change from Industrial Compatible (IC) to Neighborhood Activity Center (NAC)

Text Amendment:

In recognition of the changing conditions along Kennesaw Avenue, the Board of Commissioners recommends that the approximate 1.1 acre parcel on the south side of Hames Road and east side of Kennesaw Avenue be amended to the Neighborhood Activity Center (NAC) future land use category. In an effort to provide a more compatible use with the neighboring residential



community, county staff recommends that the following zoning categories be encouraged: Low Rise Office (LRO) or Office/Services (OS).

Amendment #3

Parcel:

16093900120

Location:

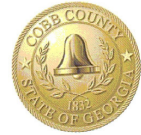
North side of Kirk Road east of Kennesaw Ave

Future Land Use amendment:

Add text amendment only

Text Amendment:

In recognition of the changing conditions along Kennesaw Ave, the Board of Commissioners recommends that the approximate 1.9 acre parcel on the north side of Kirk Road east side of Kennesaw Avenue encourage the following zoning categories: Low Rise Office (LRO), Office/Services (OS), or Office and Institutional (O&I) in order to minimize potential impacts on nearby residential and recreational uses.



Appendix

Photos of surrounding study area



North side along Old Highway 41



East side of study area



Westside of study area along Kennesaw Avenue



South of study area along Old Highway 41 and Kirk Road



Looking west into study area from City of Marietta



Residential property



Industrial and Commercial Uses on Hames Road



Industrial Use along Hames Road



Industrial Use on Hames Road



Uses at Old Highway 41 and Hames Road Intersection



Industrial uses on Hames Road



Uses along Kennesaw Avenue just south of Kirk Road



At Sundial looking south into study area



Industrial and Office Uses on Kirk Road



Office uses on Kirk Road



Industrial uses on Kirk Road



Office uses on Kirk Road



Industrial uses on Kirk Road

Other Photo



Non-residential use abutting residential use